





*Socrates with Xanthippe  
on his Last Day*

**Art Aeon**

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**Art Aeon**

***Socrates with Xanthippe  
on his Last Day***

A fictional narrative poem  
on the final day of Socrates  
in the tercet stanzas

Dedicated to  
my revered Greek sages and poets:

*Socrates* (c. 469-399 BCE),

*Plato* (c. 427- c. 347 BCE),

*Aeschylus* (c. 525- c. 455 BCE),

and

*Xenophanes* (c. 570- c. 475 BCE)

They have inspired, nurtured,  
and sustained me to sing of  
their sacred ideals and sublime poetry  
in this plain song.

## Synopsis

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day* by Art Aeon is a fictional narrative poem in the tercet stanzas. It sings of an imaginary dialogue between the character, *Xanthippe*: the widow of Socrates, and the character, *Plato*, who visits *Xanthippe* soon after the execution of his revered mentor Socrates.

The state of affairs in this story is the same as that in *The Phaedo* of the historic philosopher Plato (423-347 BCE): On his last day in the Athenian prison, what things Socrates discussed with his devoted friends, and how he met his death.

But the content of the present fiction is substantially different from Plato's *Phaedo*: The main topic of Plato's *Phaedo* is about Socrates's arguments for the immortality of the soul. In this fiction, the character *Socrates*, is portrayed to discuss various topics: On the nature of death; On the meanings of mystic words such as, 'soul,' 'immortality,' 'god,' 'muses,' etc.; On the nature of justice; On the ethical problems of the Olympian deities as depicted by Homer, Hesiod, and other great Greek poets in their epics and tragedies.

*Socrates* introduces the profound and revolutionary philosophic ideas of Xenophanes (c. 570- c. 475 BCE) who criticized Homer and Hesiod for their portrayal of the Olympian gods like humans and immoral. After discussions on the impossibility for any human to know the true nature of deity, they examine the tragedy *Prometheus Bound* of Aeschylus (c. 525- c. 455 BCE) to discuss the topic of divine justice.



In time, the jailor comes in, and sends away everyone except *Xanthippe*. *Socrates* takes a nap before his execution. When he wakes up, he relates to *Xanthippe* his mysterious last dream: How he happened to meet Prometheus, the compassionate saviour of the mankind from the Zeus's plan of their extermination; how he repented to Prometheus for the people's vile bigotry of Zeus in disrespect of their saviour; and how he learned the deep mystery of the vast cosmic drama of the universe.

At sunset, *Socrates* thanks *Xanthippe* for her devotion; prays to Athena to protect his beloved family; and dedicates his spirit to Prometheus. Then he drinks the poison in composure and meets his death in peace.

Thus finishes *Xanthippe* her recollection of the final day of Socrates. Deeply moved, *Plato* vows to *Xanthippe* that he will devote his life to study what Socrates taught, and to immortalize his ideals by writing them into books for humankind to study. Here ends this fictional narrative song: ***Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day.***

## Prologue

This fictional narrative on Socrates (469-399 BCE) is inspired by and based on the Socratic dialogues of Plato (423-347 BCE): *Euthyphro*; *Apology*; *Crito*; and the climactic *Phaedo* [For the references used in this work, see **Epilogue**].

The state of affairs is the same in this story as that in Plato's dialogue *Phaedo*. On his last day in the Athenian prison, what things Socrates discussed with his devoted friends, and how he met his death. But there are substantial differences in the content of the present fiction from Plato's *Phaedo* as listed below:

(1) In the present work, the narrator is the widow of Socrates, *Xanthippe* (not *Phaedo* of Elis). She relates the episodes to the character, *Plato*, in Athens (not to Echecrate in Phlius). *Plato* has come to see *Xanthippe* at her home soon after Socrates's execution to repent that he did not come to see Socrates on his final day. He requests *Xanthippe* to recount how Socrates met his death.

(2) In this story, the character *Xanthippe* is present with Socrates in prison throughout the episodes. She is the only witness of his death (in contrast to Plato's *Phaedo*; Socrates sent away his weeping wife at an early episode). *Xanthippe* is portrayed as a devoted upright wife who raises sensible questions on Zeus and Hera's morality and the sufferings of Prometheus and Io, depicted in the Greek tragedies.

(3) The characters in *Xanthippe*'s narration includes Antisthenes (c. 445-c. 365 BCE) who participated actively in profound philosophical discussions with Socrates, Crito, Cebes, and Simmias, the same characters who appeared in Plato's *Phaedo*.

(4) The predominant topic of their discussions in Plato's dialogue *Phaedo* (subtitled *On the Soul*) was about whether the soul was immortal. Plato portrayed his character 'Socrates' striving hard to prove that the soul was immortal.

(5) In contrast, the main topics of their discussions in the present fiction are: On the nature of death; On the meaning of the mystic words such as 'soul,' 'god,' 'immortality,' 'muses;,' On the justice of gods; and on the ethical problems of the Olympian gods as depicted by Homer, Hesiod, and other great Greek poets in their epics or tragedies.

(6) In this story, the character *Socrates* is portrayed to be agnostic about what would happen to him when he meets his death; he speculates that the state of death may be one of two things: Either he would perish into an absolute nothingness so that the dead has no more consciousness like in an endless deep sleep. If so, death would be a wonderful reward of timeless peace. Or, if death would set in the mysterious transmigration of the soul to the unknown mystic realm, as most people hope, he wishes to pass his timeless after-life in conversing on wisdom with his revered dead sages there.

(7) When *Antisthenes* asks *Socrates* about the reality of 'soul,' 'gods,' and 'immortality,' he responds that they are mystic words coined by poets and religious people to tell fanciful stories of their imaginations. Such imitative arts cannot represent the true reality; they may mislead ignorant populace to believe as if they were true.

(8) When *Crito* asks about the divine authority of muses who inspired Homer and Hesiod to sing their poems, Socrates says that 'muses' are ingenious poetic conceits invented by the poets. He quotes the incisive criticisms of Homer and Hesiod by Xenophanes (c.579-c.475 BCE): "*Homer and Hesiod attributed to the gods all things that are disreputable and are to be punished when done by men. And they told of the gods many ungodly deeds: stealing, adultery, and deception of each other. The poets portray that the gods were also begotten as humans are, and they wear man's clothing, and that the gods have human speech and body...*"

(9) Antisthenes is deeply elated by Xenophanes's cogent objections to the traditional misrepresentations of gods like humans. He wishes to know what Xenophanes proposed how the gods should be represented in truth. Socrates quotes his terse, abstruse assertions in Xenophanes's philosophic poem: "*GOD is ONE, supreme among gods and men, and not like mortals in form or in mind. The whole sees, the whole perceives, the whole hears. Without efforts GOD sets in motion all things by mind and thought. ONE always abides in the same place, without changing at all.*"

(10) Then, Cebes raises critical objections to Xenophanes's concept of GOD. If ONE is the almighty, omniscient, and eternal GOD that sets in motion all things by ONE's mind and thought without efforts and any change in ITSELF, then such GOD would be absolutely indifferent about anyone; Nothing to do with human affairs nor humans could worship such GOD in any way that is possible for them to do. Most of all, Xenophanes could not know such GOD at all, because ONE is presumed to be beyond the comprehension of any human.

(11) Socrates responds that Xenophanes did not pretend that he had a true knowledge of such abstract, abstruse GOD, or how to worship ONE. He confessed the intrinsic limit of the human's capability of knowing such things in his poem: *"...and, of course, the clear and certain truth no man has seen nor will there be any human who knows about GOD and what I say about such things. For even if, in the best case, one happens to speak just of what has been brought to pass, still he himself would not know the ultimate truth....But opinion is allotted to humans. These things seem to me to resemble the reality. As GOD does not reveal things clearly to mortals, men should find them out better by searching in the course of time."*

(12) Antisthenes asks Socrates what justice is. He responds that justice is concerned with the social relations among individuals and suggests that they would examine Aeschylus's tragedy, *Prometheus Bound*, and discuss whether Zeus's punishment of Prometheus was just or not. Antisthenes thinks that it was an unjust abuse of power by Zeus. But Cebes disagrees; Zeus was the ultimate arbitrator of all justice as he had the supreme power. Whatever he did must be deemed just, and whatever he said was the divine law for all others to obey.

(13) At this point, Xanthippe raises critical questions about why Zeus and Hera have been portrayed as such vile, obnoxious, and disgusting characters by the famous poets. If Zeus was really so bad, why did we worship him, instead of our good and wise benefactor Prometheus? Socrates confesses that they were the very riddles that had disturbed his perplexed mind. He tries to speculate about the origins of myths and religions in the development of various civilizations.

(14) The jailor announces that it is the time for all visitors to leave except Xanthippe. Socrates bid his last farewell to his devoted friends and his beloved three young sons.

(15) Socrates takes a nap before his execution. When he wakes up, he relates to Xanthippe his mysterious and numinous last dream; how he happened to meet Prometheus, the compassionate saviour of the mankind from Zeus's cruel plan and our wise teacher of reasoning and use of fire; how

he repented to Prometheus for the people's vile bigotry of Zeus in disrespect of their saviour; and how he learned the deep mystery of the vast cosmic drama of the universe which unfolds by timeless, universal principles, and so on.

(16) At sunset, the jailor comes in with the poison, but he cannot offer it to Socrates to drink. He confesses his dire agonies in executing his revered wise and holy man. Socrates thanks him for his kindness, but he urges that both of them must obey Athens's laws with good cheers and hopes. Socrates thanks Xanthippe for her devotion; prays to Athena for the protection of his beloved family; and dedicates his spirit to Prometheus. Then he drinks the poison in composure and meets his death in peace.

(17) Thus ends *Xanthippe* her recollection of the final day of Socrates. Deeply moved, *Plato* vows to *Xanthippe* that he will devote his life to study what Socrates taught, and to immortalize his ideals by writing them into books for humankind to study. Here ends this fictional narrative song: ***'Socrates with Xanthippe on his last day.'***

*Socrates with Xanthippe  
on his Last Day*

*Narrative Poem  
in the Tercet Stanza*



*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*A pensive young man visits the mourning  
widow of Socrates, shortly  
after he met his death* 3  
*in the Athenian prison. ‘Good to see you,  
Plato. We missed you on the last day  
of Socrates in this world,’* 6  
*says Xanthippe. ‘Pease forgive me. I was  
too ill with dire grief: I could not bear  
to see him die!’ says* 9  
*Plato, ‘I come to repent my cowardice.  
How deep I wish to have witnessed  
what my revered mentor* 12  
*said on his last day, and how he met his death.  
Would you please share with me all things  
that happened on that day,* 15

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

even though it will renew your sorrows  
and anguishes. I wish to preserve  
the precious legacy of 18

Socrates— the true lover of wisdom—  
by writing it for generations  
of mankind to come.’ 21

‘They were too deep and abstruse for me to grasp,’  
*says Xanthippe*, ‘yet I will try  
to bring back to my mind 24

what has been said and done as precisely  
as possible. Our good friend, Crito,  
came to me before dawn; 27

He said: “*The ship of Theseus came home  
from Delos; this day Socrates  
is to die. Let us hurry* 30

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*to the prison to rescue him in time.*  
*Win him, Xanthippe, with your love*  
*to escape from his wrong death* 33  
*in injustice. I have done something for*  
*the jailer. Cebes and Simmias are*  
*waiting to escort him* 36  
*wherever he will choose to settle in.*  
*You and your children will follow him*  
*in time.” When we went in* 39  
*the prison, Socrates was just released*  
*from his shackles. “How good to be free,”*  
*said he, “from the bondage of* 42  
*fetters!” Embracing him in tears, I told him*  
*what Crito had devised to gain*  
*his freedom and pleaded him* 45

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

to follow it immediately.’ ‘Why did  
Socrates reject your plan?’ *asks*  
*Plato*. ‘He insisted that 48

he heard his mysterious inner voice  
forbidding him from involving  
in such impious acts,’ 51

*says Xanthippe*. ‘Why did he think that it  
would be impious to avoid  
the vicious injustice, 54

inflicted on him by lunatic vile mobs?’  
*asks Plato*. ‘This is what he said:  
“I thank you, my dear friend, 57

*Crito, for your devotion and sacrifice.*  
*But we must obey God and uphold*  
*justice: let me die here 60*

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*peacefully, keeping my conscience intact.”*

*“How can it be true justice,” said*

*Crito, “to kill a wise*

63

*innocent man? If the vile mobs succeed  
in killing you, Socrates, where*

*could we find another*

66

*honest voice of righteousness? A teacher  
as true, good, and kind? Our beloved state  
Athens is gravely ill*

69

*with injustice. We must not allow her  
to commit such an evil misdeed.*

*Saving her wisest man*

72

*is to save very justice of our Athens!”*

*“No, my good Crito,” said Socrates*

*in a calm voice, “we must not*

75

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*do wrong to requite the wrong. If you love me  
as much as I love our Athens,  
let me die, willingly* 78

*obeying her laws; it was Athens that  
brought me to this world, and nurtured  
my mind as well as my body.* 81

*Let this paltry body fall a sacrifice  
to revive the noble spirit  
of our beloved Athens.”* 84

Then Crito fell speechless in deep despair.  
“Don’t you pity your young three sons?  
How could I keep on living 87  
bereft of you, my dear husband?” sighed I.  
“What you say weighs on my mind, too,  
Xanthippe,” said Socrates 90

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

in a tender voice, “*but I have learned it all  
too well—as Hector told his young  
beloved wife, Andromache—*” 93

*to stand up bravely to do our duties:  
For Hector, to fight in the front ranks  
to defend his beloved Troy;* 96

*For Socrates, to die here faithfully  
to uphold the laws of his beloved  
Athens in obedience.* 99

*If I would shrink from death now, I shall die  
of shame to face even a stranger,  
let alone my upright friends!”* 102

At that time, Simmias and Cebes came in.’  
‘What did they say to Socrates?’  
*asks Plato.* ‘Simmias spoke 105

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

in cheerful mood: *“Socrates, we are all ready,  
right now. Which place have you chosen  
to go with us?”* “My dear 108  
*Simmi*as, I will go to the banquet,”  
said Socrates smiling, *“in Hades,  
but not with you, my friend;* 111  
*Only I shall go there all by myself soon.”*  
*“What? You choose to die, Socrates?”*  
*“Yes, Simmi*as; I shall 114  
*sail to the common port for all mortals.”*  
*“By Zeus, how come are you so  
cheerful, Socrates,”* asked 117  
Simmi<sup>a</sup>as in awe, *“to meet death?”* *“Why not,  
Simmi*as? Do you know what death  
*really is?”* asked Socrates. 120



*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*“No, I don’t really know it, but I do  
fear death.” “Neither do I know what  
death is in truth. But fearing* 123  
*death, I think,” said Socrates, “is nothing  
else than thinking one knows what one  
really does not know; death* 126  
*could be the greatest of all blessings to man,  
who knows? But we fear it, as if  
we knew that it is the worst* 129  
*of all evils.” “By heavens, Socrates!”  
said Cebes, “why do you think that  
death may be a blessing* 132  
*to man?” “I speculate, dear Cebes, that  
the state of death,” said Socrates,  
“may be one of two things:* 135

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*Either an absolute nothingness so that  
the dead has no more consciousness  
like in an endless deep sleep,* 138  
*in which the sleeper does not even dream.*  
*If so, death would be a wonderful  
reward of timeless peace:* 141  
*For all time would be no longer than a night.”*  
*“But I fear,” said Simmias, “such  
nothingness of death. I hope* 144  
*that our soul will survive the death of our body.”*  
*“That is the other possibility:”*  
*said Socrates, “if death* 147  
*sets in the transmigration of the soul to the other  
mystic realm—as most people hope,  
and you Pythagoreans* 150

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*firmly believe in—then what greater blessing  
could there be for us than to die  
wisely?” “How could death be* 153  
*a blessing?” asked Cebes, “What would you do,  
Socrates, in the dreadful dark realm  
of the dead to make it* 156  
*a greater blessing to be there than here?”  
“If our soul is immortal as  
we presume, then those of* 159  
*all our dead ancestors should dwell in that  
realm to which I am about to go.  
How much I wish to pass* 162  
*my timeless afterlife in conversing  
with good, wise people there. If this  
be ever possible,* 165

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*what price would I not pay, even to suffer  
deaths many times, to associate with  
such godlike heroes, sages,* 168  
*and sublime poets there?” “But you do not  
really believe in, Socrates,  
what you have just said so* 171  
*hypothetically, do you?” asked Cebes.  
“Why not, Cebes? A wise man, I think,  
should be ready and willing* 174  
*to die at any time. Anyone who pursues  
philosophy should study nothing  
but how to die and be dead* 177  
*wisely,” said Socrates.’ ‘Did anyone ask  
Socrates,’ interrupts Plato,  
‘what he meant by dying* 180

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

wisely and how to prepare oneself for it?’

‘I remember,’ says *Xanthippe*,

‘what *Simmias* said: “By Zeus,

*you are joking, Socrates, to cheer us up.*

*If the common folks heard what*

*you just said, they would agree*

*that philosophers pretend not to fear death;*

*Therefore, those who claim themselves as*

*philosophers rightly*

*deserve death. In fact, as we all know well*

*so painfully that the jury*

*of the Athenian court*

*condemned you to death on false accusations*

*of impiety and corrupting*

*the youths.” “My dear Simmias,”*

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

said Socrates beaming gentle smiles, “*they*  
*would be speaking the truth without*  
*knowing the real reason* 198  
*why philosophers desire death, and in what*  
*way they deserve death, and what kind*  
*of death it is.” “Those are* 201  
*the most important things,”* said Cebes, “*I*  
*wish to learn from you, Socrates,*  
*before you leave us forlorn.* 204  
*Please impart us your profound wisdom on*  
*these grave mysterious matters*  
*so that we may keep it* 207  
*as your wise immortal legacy for all mortals*  
*how to overcome fears of their death.”*  
*“What I know about these matters,* 210

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*dear Cebes,” said Socrates, “is nothing  
but plain facts, self-evident to all:*

*All creatures are born to live,* 213  
*and then to die at the end of their life’s journey.*

*This is the universal way of  
nature or the providence* 216  
*of God. Hence, all living beings obey it  
naturally, except humans*

*who fear death consciously.* 219

*Our fears of the unknowable after death  
must be the source from which religions  
have arisen in all human* 222  
*societies since the time immemorial:*

*To overcome the fears of their death  
peoples worship their gods* 225

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*as their ideals of immortality,  
and believe in immortality  
of their souls, wishing* 228  
*that they will survive the death of their bodies.*  
*But a philosopher must study  
the true way of nature,* 231  
*and die wisely without fear when his turn  
to depart from this world comes in time,  
conforming gracefully* 234  
*with the true way of nature.” “Even if,” asked  
Cebes, “such a philosopher knew  
that his soul would perish* 237  
*forever into nothingness after the death  
of his body, do you insist so,  
Socrates?” “Yes, I think,* 240



*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*one should, if one is a true lover of  
wisdom; as I confessed before,”*  
said Socrates, “I am 243  
*utterly uncertain what will happen  
to me when I meet death this day:  
I may perish forever* 246  
*into nothingness at peace; or if my soul  
survives death, then I would enjoy  
conversing with many souls* 249  
*of the dead about wisdom in the other  
mysterious realm. In any case,  
I want to meet my death* 252  
*with good cheers rather than in ignorant fears.”*  
At this time, Antisthenes came in.  
“Welcome, my dear Antisthenes!” 255

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*You came at just the right time to rescue me  
with regards to crucial questions:*

*Would my soul, if I have* 258

*such a thing, perish into nothingness  
forever when I die at this*

*sunset, or would it keep on* 261

*living perpetually as most peoples  
blindly hope for?" asked Socrates.'*

*'What? Did Socrates raise,'* 264

*interrupts Plato in shock, 'such strange questions,  
expressing his skepticism*

*on the immortality* 267

*of our soul?' 'Yes. That was what I heard.*

*Check it with Antisthenes or*

*Crito to confirm what* 270

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

I related to you, as I understood very  
little what they talked about soul,  
its immortality, 273  
and other abstruse unearthly things,' says  
*Xanthippe*. 'How did Antisthenes  
respond,' asks *Plato*, 'to such 276  
questions of Socrates?' 'He said: "*I do not  
know, Socrates, what 'soul' really is,  
let alone whether it is 279  
immortal or mortal. Here are Simmias  
and Cebes, the learned Pythagoreans:  
They would know about soul 282  
much better than I. If young Plato comes to  
see you—I hope he will join us soon—  
he will express his ideas 285*

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*about the soul with great enthusiasm.*

*Now, I wish to ask you a naïve*

*question: people ascribe*

288

*to gods immortality. But how can*

*any fleeting human being really*

*know other unseen beings,*

291

*such as gods or souls, to be immortal,*

*Socrates?” “I think nobody knows*

*what immortality is:*

294

*It is merely what we—mortal humans—*

*imagine,” said Socrates, “that how*

*gods and other divine*

297

*beings live ever without suffering death,*

*so differently from all mortal*

*creatures on earth.” “If it is*

300

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*merely our presumption, then how can we know  
whether it is true or not?”*  
asked Antisthenes. “It is 303  
*impossible for us to know them, as they are  
mystic words coined by religious  
people to tell their strange* 306  
*mythical stories: Such imitative arts  
cannot represent the direct  
knowledge of true reality,* 309  
*and hence may mislead most populace,  
especially tender vulnerable  
youths,”* said Socrates. 312  
“By Zeus, do you think, Socrates,” said  
Crito, “that our great poet, Homer,  
has misled us somehow?” 315

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*“I revere Homer as the supreme maker  
of the great epics;” said Socrates,  
“And yet we must not put 318  
any man or anything above truth; most people  
have been misled to believe that  
priests and poets can see 321  
unseen gods and know their minds.” “How so?”  
asked Crito. “Because a great poet  
like Homer sings of things 324  
unreal so vividly as if they were real,  
that people are enthralled to believe  
that the poet must have 327  
genuine knowledge of the things they sing  
to us,” said Socrates. “This is,”  
said Crito in a solemn tone, 330*

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*“a grave matter, we must examine in the depth.  
Can you show us, Socrates, that  
The Iliad is a mere 333  
fable, conjured up by Homer?” “I will  
try it, dear Crito, if you help me  
by answering my questions: 336  
Do you believe that Homer ever met  
and conversed with godlike heroes  
such as Odysseus, 339  
Hector, or Achilles, of whom he tells  
us so vividly in his epics?”  
asked Socrates. “No, it is 342  
impossible, but Homer never claimed  
that he had actually witnessed  
the Trojan War; he must 345*

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*have heard of the legends of the War, passed  
down through our long oral traditions,”*  
said Crito. “*Thus Homer* 348  
*did not have any genuine true knowledge  
about who those heroes really were;*  
*Nor could he know what had* 351  
*actually happened during the War,”* said  
Socrates. “*I agree with what*  
*you spoke, but the narrator* 354  
*of The Iliad is not Homer himself,*  
*I think, but the muse, invoked by*  
*Homer to tell him about* 357  
*the anger of Achilles and its grave*  
*consequences so that Homer may*  
*relate the story—sung* 360



*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*by the divine muse—to mankind,” said Crito.*  
*“Yes, I do marvel at Homer’s*  
*great poetic genius:* 363  
*He invokes the muse to be the narrator*  
*as poetic conceit, I surmise,”*  
said Socrates, *“but do you* 366  
*believe, my dear Crito, that The Iliad*  
*is an epic created by the muse,*  
*not a work of Homer?* 369  
*Or would you claim that Homer was a god*  
*in disguise of a humble blind*  
*minstrel, wandering all* 372  
*over the wide Greece to teach the ways of gods*  
*to men?” “It is a sublime work,*  
*I think, of the man, we call* 375

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*Homer,” said Crito. “This creative poet  
wrought his marvellous great epics  
as if he were a ‘maker 378  
of gods’; he seems to know the mind of every  
god in the fabulous Olympus;  
How lively Homer portrays 381  
Zeus, Hera, Athena, Poseidon,  
Aphrodite, Thetis, Apollo,  
and other gods with such 384  
characteristic personalities far more concrete  
and vivid than any real living  
person I know in Athens! 387  
The poet makes up all these Olympian gods  
to play their roles of selfish, pettish  
pawns on the vast stage of 390*

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*his divine tragedy, called The Iliad,  
compelling ambitious, proud, haughty  
heroes to gory, morbid,* 393

*cruel killings for vainglory and vile  
pillages for greed and lust,” said  
Socrates in deep thoughts.* 396

*“Your incisive reasoning, Socrates,”  
said Crito, “makes our divine poet  
Homer look like a wily* 399

*impostor. Do you find the same fault in  
Hesiod?” “It is more obvious,  
I think, in the case of* 402

*Hesiod.” “How is it so, Socrates?” asked  
Crito. “Let me remind you of  
how Hesiod began* 405

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*his Theogony; he told us that the muses  
said to him while he shepherded in  
lofty Helicon: ““Shepherds* 408  
*of the wilderness, wretched things, mere bellies,  
we know how to speak many false things  
as though they were true; but* 411  
*we know, when we will, to utter true things.””*  
*Then the muses sang to him how the world  
and gods came forth to be* 414  
*in the beginning of time; the whole content  
of his Theogony was presented  
to be what he heard from* 417  
*the muses. Now, dear Crito, what do you make  
of Hesiod’s claim?” “Even if  
we suppose that Hesiod* 420

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*had a divine ear to hear what the muses  
spoke about the genesis of gods,  
we cannot know whether* 423  
*what he reported is true or false, because  
the muses proclaimed—if we should trust  
Hesiod—that they knew* 426  
*how to speak false things as if they were true,”*  
said Crito. “*We can prove clearly,*”  
said Cebes, “*that the muses* 429  
*spoke false things about gods to Hesiod—if  
we can trust him.” “How can you?” asked  
Crito. “Hesiod claimed* 432  
*that the nine muses were born of the union  
between Zeus and Mnemosyne:  
If so, it is impossible* 435

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*for any one of the muses to have witnessed  
how Chaos came to be the first,  
and Earth the next: they could not* 438  
*have any true knowledge of what actually  
happened at the beginning of time,”*  
said Cebes. “I agree 441  
*with you, Cebes,”* said Crito, “*but the muses  
might have heard the story from elder gods  
of immemorial era.”* 444  
*“Well, if we trust Hesiod, all elder gods  
had been confined in Hades long  
before Zeus begat* 447  
*the muses: each preceding generation  
of gods had been incarcerated  
by the next one in vile* 450

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*vicious violence till Zeus put his father  
Cronus deep into the dark Hades.”*

*“I am convinced,” said Crito,* 453

*“that the muses spoke false things to Hesiod:  
Gods keep the order of Cosmos;*

*They would not disturb it as* 456

*Hesiod claimed what he’d heard from the muses.”*

*“It is brazen Hesiod, I think, who  
conjured up such bizarre* 459

*gruesome fibs from his inane morbid mind,  
cunningly attributing them*

*to the blameless muses!” said* 462

Antisthenes in stern indignation, “*Gods  
are wise and righteous; they cannot  
commit such shameless sins* 465

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*and vile, horrible crimes as prattled by  
Hesiod. I am deeply perplexed  
how he has been allowed* 468  
*to infect so many generations of naïve  
people with such fatal, pernicious  
diseases of his mad mind,* 471  
*far more dangerous than devastating plagues.  
Such an evil swindler, I insist,  
should have been executed for* 474  
*impiety and blasphemy to protect  
the vulnerable young people.  
Yet, as you know too well,* 477  
*we all have learned his Theogony, and keep  
on teaching it to our children,  
as if it were a work* 480



*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*of true wisdom, magically imparted*  
*by the muses to Hesiod; and he*  
*has been honoured as if* 483  
*he were a divine prophet!”* When Antisthenes  
expressed his radical opinions  
about Hesiod, gloomy silence 486  
prevailed in the room.’ ‘I admire,’ says Plato,  
‘the keen and upright insight as  
well as the brave courage 489  
of Antisthenes on this crucial matter.  
What did Socrates say about it?’  
‘In a serene sincere voice,’ 492  
*says Xanthippe, ‘Socrates spoke: “My brave*  
*wise Antisthenes, I confess that*  
*Hesiod’s Theogony* 495

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*has bewildered me all my life, too. Your  
thoughtful and valiant indictment  
reminds me of Xenophanes:* 498

*The profound, revolutionary, and wise  
philosopher who admonished  
Hesiod and Homer* 501

*for their misrepresentations of the deity.”  
“Please teach me,” said Antisthenes,  
“who Xenophanes was.* 504

*What is his philosophic legacy which  
you have remarked as profound  
and revolutionary?”* 507

*“Xenophanes of Colophon, the son  
of Dexias,” said Socrates,  
“was a conscientious* 510

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*and scientific thinker in the golden era  
of our first philosophy. Following  
the Milesian tradition* 513

*of Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes,  
he studied first concrete phenomena  
of nature to infer* 516

*the underlying principles that embody  
all things. Travelling through the wide  
realms of Greece, he settled in* 519

*Sicily, then in Magna Graecia.  
As for his works, I remember  
just some of his poems.* 522

*And yet they revealed to me Xenophanes's  
unique revolutionary thoughts:  
He sternly criticized* 525

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*the traditional portrayal of gods  
in the poems by Hesiod  
and Homer as absurd* 528  
*and ridiculous.” “What cogent reasons  
did Xenophanes provide,” asked  
Crito, “in his gallant* 531  
*criticisms against the divine poems of  
our revered Homer and Hesiod?”*  
*“He asserted two reasons:* 534  
*First, their comic portrayal of our gods  
as if the gods were immoral  
characters in their plays.* 537  
*Xenophanes wrote: “Homer and Hesiod  
attributed to the gods all things  
that are disreputable* 540

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

and are to be punished when done by men;  
And they told of the gods many ungodly  
deeds: stealing, adultery, 543  
and deception of each other.” *Do you think,*  
*dear Crito, that Xenophanes*  
*made false accusations* 546  
*of Homer and Hesiod?”* asked Socrates.  
“No. I admit that these poets told us,”  
said Crito, “ungodly 549  
*misdeeds done by the gods. What is the next*  
*charge, put forward by Xenophanes*  
*against these poets?”* “He objected 552  
*to the depiction of the gods like humans*  
*in the poems of Hesiod*  
*and Homer. Xenophanes wrote:* 555

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

““But the poets portray that the gods were  
also begotten as humans are,  
and that they wear man’s clothing, 558  
and that the gods have human speech and body.  
Yes, and if oxen and horses or lions  
had hands, and could paint with 561  
their hands, and produce works of art as men do,  
then horses would paint the forms of  
their gods like horses, and oxen 564  
like oxen, and make the body of their gods  
in their own images according to  
their several kinds.”” 567

*Do you have any objection to this argument  
set forth by Xenophanes?” said*  
Socrates. *“No! I am wholly* 570

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*convinced by Xenophanes to realize,”*  
said Crito, “*that how artfully*  
*Homer and Hesiod* 573  
*portrayed the gods as if they were their handy*  
*loyal actors, playing faithfully*  
*their plots of human dramas,* 576  
*magically disguised with divine masks.”*  
“*I think so, too,*” said Socrates.’  
*At this point, Plato asks:* 579  
‘Did anyone request Socrates to explain  
what Xenophanes had expounded on  
the true nature of gods, 582  
in contradiction to their traditional  
anthropomorphic portrayal  
by our priests and poets?’ 585

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

‘Yes. I recall that Antisthenes made,’ says  
Xanthippe, ‘such a request: “When  
Xenophanes objected 588  
to such traditional misrepresentations  
of the gods by our famed poets,  
did he propose a new way 591  
how the gods should be truly represented?  
Or did Xenophanes deny  
the very existence of 594  
any god in truth?” “Those are the most vital  
questions, my dear Antisthenes,”  
said Socrates, “I wish 597  
to learn the right answers from the true sage,  
Xenophanes himself, if it  
be possible for me 600



*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*to meet and discuss with him in the other  
realm. The best we may try here is  
to guess what Xenophanes* 603  
*might have implied in terse, deep, and abstruse  
assertions in his poems. They read:*  
“GOD is ONE, supreme among 606  
gods and men, and not like mortals in form  
or in mind. The whole sees, the whole  
perceives, the whole hears. 609  
Without efforts, GOD sets in motion all things  
by mind and thought. ONE always abides  
in the same place, without 612  
changing at all.” *What do you think of such  
deep revolutionary insight  
of wise Xenophanes?”* 615

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

said Socrates. *“He seems to open my blind eyes,”*  
said Antisthenes, *“to see the new*  
*aspect of GOD—ONE and ALL:*

618

*GOD is neither to be born nor to die*  
*but the eternal ONE, and perfect*  
*in wisdom and virtue.*

621

*GOD is the whole Cosmos in itself, ever*  
*alive, being aware of itself as*  
*ONE in all its infinite*

624

*diversity, and capable of timeless*  
*boundless wise volition. Such is*  
*the true aspect of GOD,*

627

*revealed anew by Xenophanes to me,*  
*Socrates.”* When Antisthenes  
expressed his passionate

630

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

and resolute belief in ONE/GOD, silence  
prevailed in the prison; everyone  
was immersed in deep thoughts.’ 633

‘Did anyone comment on such imaginative  
interpretations,’ *asks Plato,*  
‘of the Xenophanes’s 636

deep enigmatic ideas by Antisthenes?’  
‘It was Crito,’ *says Xanthippe,*  
‘who spoke first: “If there is 639

*only ONE/ GOD—the whole Cosmos in Itself,*  
*then what are we to do with*  
*our traditional gods:* 642

*Almighty Zeus and his divine family*  
*in the heaven; Poseidon and his*  
*in the ocean; and the king 645*

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*of the dead, Hades, in the dark netherworld?*  
*Was Xenophanes so blasphemous*  
*and bold to disregard* 648  
*our traditional gods?” Then Socrates spoke*  
*in sober reflection: “We must not*  
*misconstrue Xenophanes;* 651  
*He was a pious, conscientious, and moral sage*  
*who taught us to avoid greed and pride,*  
*to lead a simple upright life,* 654  
*and always honour the gods deep from heart,*  
*as one of his poems attests*  
*to us: “Men making merry* 657  
*should first hymn the gods with sacred stanzas*  
*and pure words; and when they have poured*  
*out libations and prayed* 660

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

for power to do the right, since this lies  
nearest at hand... And one ought to  
praise that man who, when he 663  
has drunk, unfolds noble things as his memory  
and his toil for virtue suggests.  
But there is nothing praise- 666  
worthy in discussing battles of Titans,  
or of Giants or Centaurs,  
fictions of former ages, 669  
nor in plotting violent revolutions.  
But it is good always to pay  
careful respect to the gods.”” 672  
*Now, dear Crito, would you agree with me  
that Xenophanes was a truly  
religious man than any* 675

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*pretentious priests who claim to know how to  
deal with the gods in the matters  
of magic divination* 678

*and occult, supernatural commerce?”*

*“Yes, Socrates, I do wholly  
agree with you; thank you* 681

*for saving me from wrongly accusing  
Xenophanes in ignorance,”*

*said Crito in modesty.* 684

*Then Cebes spoke in pensive voice: “I cannot  
understand what Xenophanes meant.*

*He claimed that GOD is ONE:* 687

*The almighty, omniscient, and eternal ONE;  
GOD sets in motion all things by  
ONE’s mind and thought without* 690

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*efforts and any change in ITSELF. If so,  
such GOD would be absolutely  
indifferent about anyone;* 693

*Nothing to do with human affairs at all.  
Nor can we worship such GOD in any  
way that is possible* 696

*for humans to do. First of all, I doubt  
how could Xenophanes, a paltry  
human being, know about* 699

*such GOD beyond human comprehension!” ’  
‘That is the very point,’ interrupts  
Plato in excitement,* 702

*‘of crucial importance. How did Socrates  
or Antisthenes respond to  
the brilliant insightful* 705

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

critique, expounded by Cebes?’ ‘Beaming  
gentle smiles,’ resumes Xanthippe,  
‘Socrates spoke: “I admire 708  
your keen mind, my dear Cebes, so focused  
at the vital issue. I do not know  
what may be proper ways 711  
to worship such an abstract, abstruse GOD,  
put forward by Xenophanes.  
Nor can I guess what may 714  
be the relationship between ONE-GOD  
and our traditional family  
of the Olympian gods. 717  
Now, I must emphasize the important  
fact that Xenophanes has never  
pretended that he had a true 720



*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*knowledge of such GOD as it is impossible  
for any human to attain it.*

*He expounded the intrinsic* 723  
*limit of the human's capability of  
knowing such things as follows:*

“...and, of course, the clear and 726  
certain truth no man has seen nor will there  
be any human who knows about GOD  
and what I say about such things. 729

For even if, in the best case, one happens  
to speak just of what has been brought  
to pass, still he himself 732

would not know the ultimate truth.” *I think  
that his keen recognition of  
the inherent limit* 735

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*of human knowledge is the deepest  
and greatest revolutionary  
wisdom, revealed first by* 738  
*Xenophanes.” “Yes, I concur with you,  
Socrates,” said Cebes in delight,  
“that Xenophanes was,* 741  
*indeed, a wise, profound, self-reflective  
thinker. I wonder, however,  
what his intention was* 744  
*in pointing to us the innate limit  
of our capability to know:  
Do you think that he wanted* 747  
*to discourage us from searching for truth?”  
“No, not at all,” said Socrates,  
“on the contrary, he* 750

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*encouraged us to keep on seeking truth  
despite our intrinsic limit:*

*Xenophanes wrote: “But*

753

*opinion is allotted to humans.*

*These things seem to me to resemble  
the reality. As GOD*

756

*does not reveal things clearly to mortals,  
men should find them out better by  
searching in the course of time.”*

759

*In fact, Xenophanes had devoted all  
his life to studying a wide range  
of objects in nature,*

762

*and explained some superstitious or  
mythological things as plain  
natural phenomena,*

765

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*and hence, he repudiated absurd inane  
divination with magic. He had  
a deep faith, I think, in* 768  
*human's concrete experiential enquiry  
of nature by keen observations  
and cogent thinking as he* 771  
*attested: "Already now sixty-seven years  
my thoughts have been tossed restlessly  
up and down Greece, but then* 774  
*it was twenty and five years from my birth,  
if I know how to speak the truth about  
these things." On this my last day* 777  
*in this world with you, I wish to encourage  
you to follow the virtuous way  
of wise Xenophanes,* 780

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*in pursuing true fathomless wisdom!”*

Thus paid Socrates his heartfelt  
homage to Xenophanes. 783

Then eloquent silence prevailed in the room;  
Everyone seemed to immerse deep  
in one’s thoughts.’ ‘I feel 786

speechless, too,’ *says Plato*, ‘having heard such  
enlightening dialogues on  
GOD-ONE and the limit 789

of human knowledge; they take my breath away.  
Was that the end of their moving,  
memorable discussions?’ 792

‘Socrates kept on speaking,’ *says Xanthippe*,  
‘as if he had an eternity  
to spend in leisure.’ ‘Please 795

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

keep on relating what Socrates discussed  
with his devoted friends,' *says Plato.*

'The next topic, I recall, 798

was Aeschylus's tragedy, *Prometheus Bound,*'  
*says Xanthippe.* 'What? How did it

happen,' *asks Plato,* 'for them 801

to discuss about that awesome tragic drama  
of the gods?' 'I saw myself that  
grand tragedy!' *exclaims* 804

*Xanthippe with avid enthusiasm,* 'when it  
was performed at our great theatre,  
some years ago. Oh, how much 807

I pitied poor blameless Io! She was such  
a helpless innocent victim  
of lewd Zeus's vile lust 810

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

and merciless Hera's cruel jealousy.'

'Did you propose to Socrates  
to discuss on such matters 813  
of injustice, inflicted on helpless mortals  
by the gods?' *asks Plato*. 'No, not I!  
It was Antisthenes;' *says* 816  
*Xanthippe*, 'he asked Socrates: "*Teach us  
what justice is before you leave  
for the mystic realm, never* 819  
*to return to speak with us. Is justice  
the same for the gods as well as  
for humans?" "By heavens,* 822  
*how could I know, dear Antisthenes," said  
Socrates, "such arcane matters?  
Since justice is concerned with* 825

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*the social relations among individuals,  
I would suggest that we examine  
what unfolds in the deep* 828  
*impressive tragedy, Prometheus Bound,  
presented to us by Aeschylus:  
We may discuss whether* 831  
*Zeus's severe punishment of Prometheus  
in that drama should be regarded  
as just or not."* They were 834  
all delighted to examine the tragedy.  
Even I felt quite excited to hear  
what they would argue about 837  
that tragedy, as I had seen the play,  
and deeply moved with heartrending  
pity for poor Io and 840



*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

Prometheus, and resentful anger against  
the terrible tyranny of Zeus.’

‘I understand how you felt, 843

Xanthippe;’ *says Plato*, ‘now, tell me how  
their discussions went.’ ‘Yes, I will,’

*says Xanthippe*, ‘as I 846

have kept it in my cherished memory.

“*From which point in the drama,*” asked

Socrates, “*should we start 849*

*to examine the matter of justice?*”

“*The indignation of Prometheus*

*at Zeus’s punishment:*” said 852

Antisthenes, “*his argument reminds me  
of what you spoke at your trial,*

*Socrates.*” “*Would you recite 855*

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*for us what Prometheus spoke, if you  
remember it,” said Socrates.*

*“I will try my best:” said* 858

Antisthenes, and he began to recite  
in a solemn tone: “ “Behold what I,  
a god, endure evil 861

from the gods! With what shameful woes I am  
racked, and must wrestle here throughout  
the countless years apportioned me. 864

Such is the humiliating bondage  
the new tyrant of the gods has  
contrived against me. Woe! Woe! 867

For misery present and misery to come  
I groan, not knowing where it is  
fated deliverance from 870

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

these woes shall rise. And yet, what do I say?  
All that is to be I know full well  
in advance, nor shall any 873  
affliction come upon me unforeseen.  
My allotted doom I must bear as  
lightly as I may, knowing 876  
that the power of necessity governs  
all universally. Yet to be  
silent or not about my fate is 879  
beyond my power. Because I bestowed  
the use of divine fire on men  
that has proved to them a good 882  
teacher in every art and a useful  
means to various powerful ends.  
Such is my offence to 885

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

the gods for which I pay the penalty,  
riveted in adamant fetters  
beneath the open sky...” *Would* 888  
*this preamble of Prometheus inspire*  
*you to begin our discussion,*  
*Socrates?” “Excellent,* 891  
*Antisthenes, it certainly does! Now,*  
*may we hear about how Prometheus*  
*helped Zeus overthrow Cronus,* 894  
*his own father?” said Socrates. “I will*  
*try it:” said Crito eagerly,*  
*“This is how I remember* 897  
*what Prometheus speaks to the chorus of*  
*the daughters of Oceanus:*  
““When first the heavenly 900

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

powers were moved to wrath and mutual  
hostility was stirred up amongst them,  
some bent on casting Cronus 903  
from his throne so that Zeus might reign;  
Others, the Titans, were opposed  
to it. As Themis, my wise 906  
mother, had foretold me the way in which  
the future was fated to come to pass—  
that it was not by brute force 909  
and cruel violence, but by wisdom that  
those who should gain the throne were  
destined to prevail— 912  
I advised the Titans to choose such a wise  
course, but they laughed at me ignoring  
my advice. Thus joining 915

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

with my mother, I chose to help Zeus;  
And it was by reason of my right  
counsels that the cavernous 918  
gloom of Tartarus now hides ancient Cronus  
and his allies. Such profit did  
the new tyrant of gods 921  
receive from me, and yet with such foul return  
as this does Zeus make requital;  
For it is a common 924  
disease that inheres in the tyranny to have  
no faith in friends. With regards to  
your question for what real cause 927  
Zeus torments me, this I will make clear:  
Soon he seized his father's throne, he  
meted out various divine 930

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

prerogatives to the Olympian gods. But  
the wretched race of mankind Zeus  
intended to annihilate 933  
and create a new one. Against his bold plan,  
none dared to save mankind save  
I myself—I only had 936  
the courage. In compassion for the feeble  
mankind, I saved them from utter  
ruins. For my bold acts of 939  
compassion, I am racked by so grievous  
tortures, painful to suffer, and  
piteous to behold. 942  
I who gave mankind the first place in  
my pity, am deemed unworthy  
to win this pity for 945

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

myself, but am thus mercilessly punished,  
a spectacle that shames the fame  
of Zeus...” *This speech of* 948  
*Prometheus explains clearly the cause of*  
*his punishment by Zeus, would it not,*  
*Socrates?” “Yes, Crito!* 951  
*Aeschylus will be pleased,” said Socrates,*  
*“to hear how well you both recited*  
*his eloquent lines. Now,* 954  
*we have sufficient substances, I think,*  
*to discuss about justice with regards*  
*to the intricate affairs* 957  
*of these powerful emotive gods. Do you*  
*think that Zeus’s punishment*  
*of Prometheus is an act* 960



*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*of divine justice, or shameless brutality*  
*of the new mighty tyrant?"* When we  
heard what Socrates asked, 963  
deadly silence prevailed in the gloomy cell.'  
'In *Prometheus Bound*, Aeschylus  
presents crucial questions,' 966  
*says Plato*, 'about divine justice. How did  
they solve the difficult problems?'  
'First, Antisthenes broke 969  
the silence;' *says Xanthippe*, 'he spoke: "*I*  
*think that Zeus's insolent abuse*  
*of Prometheus cannot* 972  
*be justified as a proper execution*  
*of justice as the new sovereign*  
*of the gods."* "*I disagree,*" 975

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

said Cebes, “*although my sympathy is  
with Prometheus: as he admitted  
that he took the sacred fire* 978  
*from the realm of the gods and endowed it  
to mankind without their consent,  
Prometheus committed grave crime* 981  
*in Zeus’s point of view.*” Then Crito spoke:  
“*The gods enjoy being worshiped  
by humans. As the good use* 984  
*of fire is necessary for proper  
holy rituals, the gods must be  
pleased that Prometheus was* 987  
*merciful to teach the savage human  
races how to use the fire, how to  
cultivate barren lands,* 990

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*and make all kinds of arts—most of all, how  
to worship the unseen gods. Hence,  
I think Prometheus is* 993  
*a benefactor for the gods as well as  
for the whole of mankind rather than  
a felon to gods, wouldn't* 996  
*you agree with me, Cebes?" "You and I  
would agree, Crito, but not Zeus,  
I am afraid," said Cebes,* 999  
*"because as the supreme god, Zeus is  
the ultimate arbitrator  
of all justice, divine* 1002  
*as well as human: whatever Zeus does  
must be deemed to be absolutely  
just, and whatever he says* 1005

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*is the divine law for all others to obey.”*

When I heard such an arrogant  
argument from Cebes,

1008

my heart groaned in indignation. “*May I  
speak what my heart tells me,*” said I.

“*Of course, Xanthippe,*” said

1011

Socrates, “*what do you have in your mind?*”

“*Don’t you remember Io,*” said I,

“*the blameless chaste maiden*

1014

*who suffered such ineffable miseries,*

*wandering endlessly, disfigured*

*into a hapless wretched*

1017

*heifer stung by maddening gadfly?”* “Yes,

*I remember Io,*” said Socrates

in a gentle voice. “*What did*

1020

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*Io do wrong,” asked I “to deserve such cruel  
punishments?” “She suffered them because  
Zeus loved her,” said he.* 1023

*“Did Io ever seduce Zeus?” “No.  
She was an innocent, chaste maiden,  
Xanthippe.” “Then, why did* 1026

*Zeus punish Io?” “It was Hera, not  
Zeus, who inflicted such harsh  
horrible misfortunes* 1029

*to the poor girl,” said Socrates. “Why did  
Hera do such terrible misdeeds?”*

*“Wifely jealousy, I guess,* 1032

*drove Hera to such madness,” said Socrates.*

*“If Zeus loved Io sincerely,”  
asked I, “why did he not* 1035

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*protect her from Hera's unjust punishments?  
If gods are so bad, ungodly,  
and faithless, how could we* 1038  
*ever trust them and worship them deep from  
our hearts and souls? I cannot believe  
that our supreme god, Zeus,* 1041  
*could be such a shameless wimp and his wife,  
Hera, such a mad, obnoxious,  
and vicious bitch as portrayed* 1044  
*by our famous poets."* When I expressed  
my misgivings, uneasy feelings  
prevailed in the hushed cell.' 1047  
'I admire,' says *Plato*, 'your honest and  
brave verve, Xanthippe. Did anyone  
respond to your just challenge?' 1050

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

‘After deep meditation,’ says *Xanthippe*,  
‘Socrates spoke: “*It is the very*  
*riddle that has disturbed* 1053  
*my perplexed mind since I began to study*  
*philosophy; the human’s keen*  
*self-consciousness and fear* 1056  
*of dying make it desirable—nay,*  
*necessary—for them to worship*  
*deathless gods, and believe* 1059  
*in the individual’s soul that is supposed*  
*to transcend death. This is unique*  
*to humans: no other* 1062  
*creatures have ever had such creative*  
*minds as human beings possess.*  
*During the immemorial,* 1065

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*hard, striving eras in the development  
of human civilizations,  
the primitive peoples* 1068  
*worshiped their dead ancestors as their gods:  
They invoked the spirit of  
ancestors to protect* 1071  
*their tribes from the enemies and natural  
calamities in harsh struggles  
for survival. Even now,* 1074  
*peoples worship their household deities  
with mysterious rituals.  
Hence, it is perfectly* 1077  
*understandable why we have worshiped  
our gods in the human image,  
as we must use human* 1080



*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*language in praying for their merciful helps  
with supernatural powers.*

*Our original gods must* 1083

*have been the ideal beings with perfect  
virtues as well as with boundless  
powers to govern us* 1086

*as our trusty merciful benefactors  
as long as we worship them with  
upright acts and devout* 1089

*prayers. But why they became misrepresented  
later by prattling minstrels,  
I am deeply perplexed."* 1092

Thus spoke, Socrates fell into silence  
rapt in deep meditation.' 'I am  
indignant,' says Plato, 1095

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

‘that base, shameless, impious minstrels have  
misled the ignorant populace  
for so long eras, it seems 1098  
impossible to restore our original  
pristine religion. Enlightening  
the people from such dark 1101  
ignorance is the most urgent, crucial  
and difficult tasks for disciples  
of philosophy. Did 1104  
anyone respond to what Socrates said?’  
‘Yes,’ *says Xanthippe*. ‘Who was he?  
What did he say?’ *asks Plato*. 1107  
‘It was I who brought up a new riddle,’  
*says Xanthippe*. ‘You? What was your  
riddle about?’ *asks Plato*. 1110

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

‘It was about Prometheus,’ *says Xanthippe.*  
‘What things about Prometheus? Tell me  
exactly what you said.’ 1113  
‘I told Socrates that I had been pestered,’  
*says Xanthippe,* ‘by a much worse  
confusing riddle about 1116  
Prometheus. He asked me what matters  
on the god puzzled my mind. I said:  
“*All that I have heard of* 1119  
*Prometheus affirm that he was the wisest,*  
*the most upright, and compassionate*  
*among all gods. Do you agree?”* 1122  
They all nodded positively. “*If so,*” said I,  
“*then why do we worship Zeus,*  
*Hera, and their troublesome* 1125

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*family, instead of righteous Prometheus?”*

Then Antisthenes spoke with great zeal:

*“Absolutely, I agree*

1128

*with you, Xanthippe. We have been fickle  
cowards, betraying Prometheus:*

*Did he not save mankind*

1131

*from Zeus’s cruel plan of a total  
extermination? Didn’t he endow  
ignorant humans with*

1134

*the power of reasoning that makes us  
so distinguished from all other  
creatures creeping on earth?*

1137

*To Prometheus, we owe not only our husk  
but also who we are as thinking  
beings among savage brutes!”*

1140

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*“But why the people have never worshiped  
Prometheus,” asked I, “as their prime  
god rather than Zeus?”* 1143

*“It is, I think,” said Antisthenes, “due to  
the people’s base fanatic minds:  
Idolatry of who wields* 1146

*the strongest power.”* Then our discussion  
stalled into a heavy silence.’

‘I wonder why Socrates 1149  
did not say anything about the grave riddle  
you had brought up,’ says Plato.

‘He had been immersed,’ says 1152

*Xanthippe*, ‘in deep contemplation,  
as if he were all by himself  
roaming in another realm. 1155

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

At last, he spoke in a reflective mood: “*Zeus*  
*had been worshiped as our prime god*  
*since the time immemorial* 1158  
*long before Hesiod and Homer portrayed*  
*him as if he were a human*  
*character in their poems.* 1161  
*In Prometheus Bound, Aeschylus depicts*  
*Zeus as a terrible tyrant,*  
*in dramatic contrast* 1164  
*to Prometheus as a wise compassionate*  
*saviour of mankind. But in truth,*  
*we can never know who* 1167  
*Zeus really is nor Prometheus at all.”*  
*“If so,” asked Antisthenes, “why*  
*did Aeschylus dare to* 1170

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*portray Zeus, Prometheus, and Io  
as such concrete characters with  
various specific* 1173  
*personalities, good or bad, so vividly  
as if what they say and do were  
all true?” “All poets toil,* 1176  
*I think, to show the beauty of their arts:”  
said Socrates, “representation  
of imitated things as if* 1179  
*they were beautifully believable.  
The poetry is rooted, I think,  
deep in human nature:* 1182  
*Our instinct for imitative acts and  
our innate enjoyment in works  
of fine imitation.”* 1185

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*“I agree with you, Socrates,” said Crito  
in an eager voice, “deep from my heart.  
Whenever I hear or 1188  
    read good poems, I become enthralled by them  
as if I were experiencing  
myself all imagined things 1191  
    that are depicted so deftly in them  
by the poets, although I think  
I know well that all poems 1194  
    are sheer fantastic imaginations.” “So am I  
captivated,” said Socrates,  
    “by magic enchanting 1197  
    powers of Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles  
and others. Their works of art move me  
to tremble in awe, to weep 1200*



*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*in heartbreaking pity, and to breathe in  
the sublime!” “I know what you mean,  
Socrates,” said Crito, 1203*

*“but I wonder why the unreal stories  
created by their imaginations  
impinge such great impacts 1206*

*upon our minds, surpassing by far any  
mundane facts of concrete events that  
occur in our real life?” 1209*

*“Poetry is not concerned with truthful  
descriptions, I think,” said Socrates,  
“of concrete facts in 1212*

*the real world. The vital verve of poems,  
I believe, is the way how they  
impart the sublime beauty 1215*

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*deep into our minds.” “I see clearly what  
you point to, Socrates;” said Crito,  
“Would you please expound how 1218  
the poets achieve such noble great tasks?”  
“Well, my dear Crito, how could I know  
the sacred secret of 1221  
their art? And yet, if you allow me to  
pretend to know, I would like to  
guess. The soul of poetry 1224  
is to reveal certain truths by coherent  
representations of imagined  
events: clear logical 1227  
arrangements of episodes in such ways  
that a certain character will  
inevitably or 1230*

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*willingly do or say in a given  
circumstance as the story unfolds:*

*Don't you remember what* 1233

*Oedipus says and does when he finds out  
at last who he is?" "Of course, I do!*

*How can anyone not be moved,* 1236

*Socrates, by such an awesome climax  
of Oedipus Tyrannus," said Crito.*

*At this point, Antisthenes* 1239

*posed a critical question as if he  
had read my mind and spoke for me:*

*"But I wonder, Socrates,* 1242

*why Aeschylus has taken such grave risks  
of blasphemy by portraying*

*Zeus as a lewd seducer* 1245

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*of chaste hapless Io, a henpecked wimp  
to his overly jealous wife as well  
as the almighty merciless* 1248  
*tyrant to Prometheus?” “It was not  
Aeschylus who was the first one  
to make up such ungodly* 1251  
*personality of our most powerful god.  
He inherited such fables about  
Zeus in our ancient* 1254  
*rich mythology that had been disseminated  
orally by bygone minstrels  
from one generation to* 1257  
*the next one since the time immemorial,”  
said Socrates. “Now, I see. It was  
impossible for Aeschylus* 1260

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*to contradict the traditional stories  
of our ancient mythology,” said  
Antisthenes in concord.* 1263

*“Thank you for your clear clarification,  
Socrates;” said Crito, “I think  
that our rich immemorial* 1266

*mythology had dictated Homer, Hesiod,  
and all other poets who wrote  
what they heard from oral* 1269

*minstrels with their own artistic improvements  
without contradicting our myths.”*

*“Yes, Crito. I concur* 1272  
*with you completely. Thus, we must not blame  
Homer, Hesiod or any poet  
for their traditional* 1275

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*portrayals of our familiar deities.*

*Let us resume our discussion*

*on the Aeschylus's rendition* 1278

*of the ancient myth about Prometheus  
into his moving tragedy:*

*The Prometheus Bound:* 1281

*I deeply admire his keen insight  
on the nature of human mind*

*as well as superb talent* 1284

*and brave courage to reveal it to us.*

*Let us confess that we enjoy*

*in watching the characters* 1287

*Prometheus and Io suffering on the stage  
with heartfelt pity and sympathy.*

*The poet's insightful* 1290

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*portrayal of the heroic bearings of  
their dire fates by these characters  
on the stage imparts us* 1293  
*deep, ineffable wisdom about our own lives;  
Aeschylus makes us to weep  
in pity, purify our mind,* 1296  
*and breathe in the sublime!” said Socrates.*  
*“Yes, Socrates!” exclaimed Crito  
in heartfelt elation,* 1299  
*“You have expounded the profound mystery of  
poetic art for us; we seem  
to feel it somehow when* 1302  
*we watch the tragedies unfolding on stages  
or read moving poems, but without  
really knowing what it is!”* 1305

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

At this point, Antisthenes spoke with eager  
enthusiasm: *“If I have grasped*  
*correctly what you expounded,* 1308  
*the task of a poet is not to make*  
*concrete descriptions about who*  
*the fictional characters* 1311  
*of his story are in reality, at all.*  
*His art is concerned with how to*  
*reveal the true wisdom* 1314  
*about our mind on his stage or written pages.”*  
*“Yes, Antisthenes. That is what I tried*  
*to imply,”* said Socrates, 1317  
*“I wish to add, if I may, that a student*  
*of true philosophy should pursue*  
*the fathomless mysteries* 1320



*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*of our mind as a poet does, and find  
the way how to improve one's own  
mind towards perfection* 1323  
*rather than speculating what the world  
is made of, and how it has evolved  
to become as what it seems* 1326  
*to be to us. Or how the unseen gods  
and necessity govern us,  
even if it were possible* 1329  
*for us to peek on such cryptic arcane  
matters.”* When Socrates finished  
his sincere advice to 1332  
improve our mind, all of us became  
deeply immersed in musing on  
what had been discussed.’ 1335

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*Here pauses Xanthippe her recollection.*

‘I am amazed and deeply moved  
by Socrates’s convincing  
and enlightening advocacy of the poets.

But I wonder why our mythology  
contains such absurd fables.

Did anyone raise such a question?’ *asks Plato*  
*in pensive voice.* ‘Yes,’ *says Xanthippe,*

‘Antisthenes pleaded to

Socrates: “Please teach us about the origin  
of our puzzling mythology.”

“My dear Antisthenes,

*you ask the critical question on such arcane*  
*and mysterious matters I wish*

*to learn. But I know nothing*

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*about it except that the actual source  
of all stories is none other than  
the mind of every human* 1353  
*being. It is the intrinsic nature of our minds,  
which always make up stories not only  
when we are awake but even* 1356  
*during our sleep as dreams. Wouldn't you agree  
on this plain yet self-evident fact?"*  
said Socrates. "Of course, 1359  
*I confirm its truth!"* said Antisthenes,  
*"This proves that the so-called 'muses' are  
merely fanciful phantoms,* 1362  
*I think, conjured up by clever poets  
for their ingenious conceits to make  
people believe, as if* 1365

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*what they tell in their works had been divinely  
sanctified to be true!” “That seems to me  
a logical conclusion,”* 1368

said Socrates. At this point, Cebes raised  
a serious question: “*Such inference  
should be investigated*” 1371

*very cautiously: If we agree to regard  
that the muses are merely phantoms,  
fabricated by the humans* 1374

*in their capricious, changeful fantasies,  
then all other gods should also be  
deemed to be illusions* 1377

*of human mind,”* said Cebes in a grave mood.’  
‘Did Socrates or Antisthenes  
respond to the Cebes’s keen 1380

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

critical argument?’ *interrupts Plato.*

‘In solemnity, Socrates spoke:

*“As the multitude of* 1383

*my fellow Athenians have condemned me  
to death as a maker of new gods,*

*not recognized by our state,* 1386

*I assert that humans harbour diverse gods  
in their own peculiar beliefs  
promoted by their societies.* 1389

*The humans are born with innate necessity  
to worship certain personal  
or abstract, abstruse deities* 1392

*which have been passed down to their societies  
from their immemorial past.*

*I was born to Athens* 1395

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*which happened to worship the Olympian gods;  
If I were born to the Egyptian  
society, then certainly* 1398  
*I would have been brought up to worship Ra,  
Amun, or other deities called with  
various names by Egyptians.* 1401  
*In my youth, I yearned to have an opportunity  
to visit the ancient mystic land  
blessed by the grand Nile,* 1404  
*and to learn the much older and far more  
advanced Egyptian civilization;  
The ancient Egyptian scribes* 1407  
*knew how to write down fleeting thoughts onto  
papyrus and to immortalize  
the human knowledge for* 1410

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*generations of mankind to come. How  
much I wished to meet such Egyptian  
sages and learn their wisdom!* 1413

*Unfortunately, my eager youthful dream  
failed to become real in this life.*

*At any rate, I confess* 1416

*that I am absolutely ignorant who  
Zeus, or Amun, is in truth.*

*I have never seen 'it'* 1419

*in itself. All that I have are what I had  
heard from others about 'it,' for which  
they had no direct knowledge,* 1422

*at all, in ad infinitum." "Thank you,  
Socrates, for your enlightening  
exposition!" exclaimed* 1425

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

Antisthenes in elation, *"I wish to learn  
what makes the human mind so unique.  
After this sunset, I fear,* 1428  
*your mind will stop imparting your profound  
wisdom to us."* "Listen to your own  
*deep inner voice;"* said Socrates, 1431  
*"It is our ability to use language,  
I think, that is the utmost vital  
and crucial faculty unique* 1434  
*to human beings; in words we create  
the whole world in our minds. We can  
tell things imagined as if* 1437  
*they were real, and things real as if they were  
mere fleeting dreams. The poets sing  
mystic stories about how* 1440



*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*the gods were born, and how they fought to rule,  
as if they were sung by divine muses,  
but all in human language.* 1443

*The life and death of our godlike heroes  
have been immortalized with our words  
into epics. How could anyone* 1446

*discuss anything on wisdom without words?  
In the creative use of language,  
all our civilizations* 1449

*have evolved, I believe,” spoke Socrates  
in solemnity. Then he noticed  
the polite jailor waiting* 1452

*patiently in the room. “It must be the time  
for me to depart,” said he in  
composure. When Crito* 1455

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

saw the jailor, he went out to talk with him  
in private. Soon Crito came back  
and told us that it was 1458  
the fateful time: all to leave—except me  
if I could remain brave and calm,  
not disturbing what the jailor 1461  
had to do there. I swore that I would be brave  
to prove what it is like to be  
the wife of Socrates. 1464  
To each one of his friends, Socrates bade  
farewell, conversing in private.  
In time, Crito brought in 1467  
our young children to see off their father.  
How happy he was to embrace  
his beloved three sons! 1470

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

He tenderly hugged each child, and exulted  
in joy like an innocent child.

At last, he bade to them 1473

heartfelt loving farewell: "*My beloved sons,  
do not worry about what to gain  
in this world, but seek* 1476

*virtue, truth, and wisdom to perfect your mind.  
Honour and support your mother  
with all your heart and love.* 1479

*Steer well in your journey of life with courage,  
prudence, and inspiriting hope!"*

At last they went back home 1482

with Crito. Only Socrates and I were left  
alone in the hushed desolate prison.

Socrates took a nap 1485

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

on my lap: How peaceful he looked like  
an innocent baby sleeping in  
the warm mother's bosom! 1488

It seemed to be a blissful eternity  
to hold him tenderly in my arm,  
as if time paused from flowing. 1491

Impressive glow of the setting sun suffused  
his noble face in ineffable  
spirituality at peace. 1494

At last, Socrates gently awoke from his sleep,  
and spoke in tender, pensive voice:  
“*My beloved Xanthippe,* 1497

*a wondrous dream came in my sleep!*  
*I would like to share it with you*  
*so that you would cherish it* 1500

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*as a numinous spiritual experience.”*

*“Tell me, my love, I shall keep it  
engraved deep in my heart,”* 1503

said I. *“In my dream came Aeschylus. He bade  
me in a stern voice: “Arise Socrates!*

*Go to the trackless waste* 1506

*of Scythia, where wise righteous Prometheus  
has been suffering cruel tortures*

*by Zeus. You are the man* 1509

*of human conscience. Pay our tribute to  
the wise god for his compassion  
that saved the human race.* 1512

*Our vile shameless neglect of Prometheus  
in favour of Zeus must have been  
much worse for him to bear* 1515

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

than the pangs of cruel Zeus's persecution.”  
*Obeying to his solemn command,*  
*I set out alone to reach* 1518  
*the remote, desolate crags where Prometheus*  
*was bound in chains. I scaled countless*  
*impassible precipices,* 1521  
*imperilling my drooping body and brooding mind;*  
*The more I struggled to climb up,*  
*the higher the summit* 1524  
*seemed to soar up. I despaired that it was*  
*a mad folly to aspire to find*  
*the suffering god. Yet* 1527  
*my conscience urged me to keep on. At last,*  
*I reached the summit of barren,*  
*jagged, rocky crags. Desolate* 1530

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*solitude overwhelmed my heart. Then I heard  
a deep voice, speaking to itself:*

“Ah me, an ill-fated god, 1533  
suffering evil! With what dire miseries  
am I racked, and must endure ages?  
Where shall rise liberty 1536  
from these woes? Stop nonsense! All that is  
to come, I know ahead full well. Yet,  
to be silent, or to reveal 1539  
the decree of fate that is the question.  
Hold! Who has come here to mock at  
my ungodly sufferings?” 1542

*The tormented titan turned his pensive head  
and stared at me with his piercing  
vision. Trembling in awe, 1545*

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*I prayed:* ““O holy Prometheus, gracious  
saviour of mankind from Zeus's curse,  
and the dark deep abyss 1548  
of utter ignorance! Please forgive our baneful  
sins of idolatry for Zeus.””  
““Are you not Socrates, 1551  
the gadfly of Athens? What matter,”” *said*  
*the god*, “has brought you here to see me?””  
““My conscience urged me to 1554  
seek for you and repent our deadly sins  
of betrayal. I revere you,  
Holy God Prometheus— 1557  
the wisest, the most righteous, and the most  
compassionate of all gods!”” *Thus*  
*I prayed to him from depth* 1560



*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*of my heart and soul. Suddenly huge, fierce  
thunderbolts pierced the sky and cleaved  
the land. In shocks, I swooned.* 1563

*When I regained my senses, I saw a winged  
chariot alight nearby; a divine  
voice gently resounded: “Arise,* 1566

*Prometheus, my wise son! Necessity  
unfolds itself in time. Behold  
what time has fulfilled for you.”* 1569

*“O my dear mother Themis!” said Prometheus,  
“What urgent matters have hastened  
you to come to see me* 1572

*in this desolate rim of dread forlorn  
region at this odd hour?” “The reign  
of the gods,” said Themis* 1575

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*in solemnity, ““ceased forever!”” ““What?  
Did Zeus surrender his throne,”” asked  
Prometheus, ““to someone* 1578  
*with mightier power or to one greater in  
virtue and wisdom?”” ““No,”” sighed  
Themis, ““pompous Zeus* 1581  
*yielded to none but to his own fatal weapons.””  
““Then who is the new ruler? How  
does he fare,”” asked Prometheus,* 1584  
*““with the most vital and difficult task?””  
““None whosoever left to rule,””  
Themis said, ““or to be ruled:* 1587  
*The whole race of gods perished in horrid,  
treacherous mutual carnage: strange  
stillness prevails in gloomy* 1590

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

desolate ruins of the Olympus drifting  
in the vast dark void.” “How did the gods,”  
*Prometheus asked*, “cease to be?”” 1593  
“Did you not witness yourself,” *said Themis*,  
“conflagrations blazing the whole  
heavens?”” “In a strange dream,” 1596  
*Prometheus said*, “I beheld catastrophes  
unimaginable: Zeus came to me,  
and demanded to reveal 1599  
secret fates against him. When I refused him,  
he smote me with his thunderbolts.  
Yet, strange even in a dream, 1602  
they got around me, and flew back to Zeus,  
then exploded in him all at once,  
as if millions of new suns 1605

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

had burst into sheer violent eruptions  
of unimaginable powers  
and blinding lights; all things 1608  
seemed to disappear, even the very frame  
of space-time itself. But it must  
be frothing in my false dream.”” 1611  
““It is all too true!” *said Themis*. ““Then what  
is to come, Themis? Who will steer  
the course of necessity?”” 1614  
““It is time,”” *said the goddess*, ““that fulfills  
Necessity; how one comes to be  
is written in the threads 1617  
of life, but what one is to do in life  
is of one’s own freewill by choice,  
never by fates. Let us 1620

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

take off our masks of godhead; we all are  
the children of nature following  
its true way through time. Let us 1623  
ascend to the pure sublime spiritual realm  
where all diverse beings become  
One eternal Being 1626  
of the whole Cosmos in perfect harmony.”  
*The two divine figures gently  
fused into one sublime light, 1629  
and ascended beyond the reach of my sight.  
Then I awoke from the numinous  
and mysterious dream.” 1632*  
Thus finished Socrates confiding to me  
his strange abstruse last dream,’ says  
*Xanthippe in deep awe. 1635*

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

‘The meaning of his enlightening dream  
is too profound and mysterious  
for me to comprehend;’ 1638  
*says Plato in pensive voice, ‘Did you ask  
Socrates what he thought about it?’*  
‘No! I was too overwhelmed 1641  
to hear such an astounding mysterious dream.  
I just wept in ineffable deep  
emotions of sadness and 1644  
strange elation. He said in a gentle voice:  
“All what I told you may be merely  
*false illusions imagined* 1647  
*by my inane mind. Yet I am very happy  
that I met holy wise Prometheus,  
even if it was only* 1650

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*in my fleeting last dream, and confessed to him  
what my conscience urged me to speak.*

*It was you, Xanthippe,* 1653

*who awoke me to think about Prometheus  
on this final hour of my journey  
of our mysterious life.* 1656

*Thank you, my beloved wife, for your upright  
spirit.” “I am a simple housewife,  
who cannot understand* 1659

*your profound philosophical things, at all.  
And yet, I feel deeply that your strange,  
mysterious dream should be* 1662

*preserved in writing for the future generations  
of mankind so that they may learn  
its deep spiritual meaning.* 1665

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*As I know neither how to write nor to read,  
I wish to request someone to write  
down all that I heard from you!”* 1668

Thus I told him what my heart urged me to say.  
Beaming subtle similes Socrates spoke:

*“Carry out whatever your pure  
conscience urges you to do, my dear Xanthippe!”* ’ 1671

‘I wonder,’ *interrupts Plato,*

‘why Socrates has never 1674

written down his precious wisdom to preserve it  
into timeless invaluable books

for all mankind to study, 1677

transcending the bounds of places and ages.

Did you ask him why?’ ‘Yes. He replied:

*“You know, dear Xanthippe,* 1680



*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*that I know nothing in truth: that is all  
that I know. How can I write about  
anything which I do not* 1683  
*really know?” “But you are always immersed  
in discussing with others. If you  
really do not know like me,”* 1686  
*I asked, “how can you carry on your ceaseless  
discussions with so many diverse  
people, Socrates?” “All* 1689  
*of them have been my teachers. I learn from  
what is wrong, as well as what is right  
in them. If I had the superb* 1692  
*talent of great poets such as Homer,  
Aeschylus, Sophocles, and  
Euripides, I would love* 1695

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*to write vivid dialogues on wisdom  
in the form of lively dramas.*

*Not for vain selfish fame*

1698

*but for their inherent beauty!”* That is  
what I recall why he didn’t write  
any book,’ *says Xanthippe.*

1701

‘I appreciate what he meant;’ *says Plato,*  
‘Now, please tell me what happened after  
he told you his profound

1704

enlightening dream.’ ‘The jailor came in  
with a jar of poison. But he  
hesitated to offer it

1707

to his prisoner to drink quite a while.  
“*I am ready to go with good cheers,*”  
said Socrates. The jailor

1710

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

broke down in tears and cried, *“Please forgive me,  
revered Socrates! You’re the wisest  
and holiest man I’ve ever met.*

1713

*I would drink this poison myself to stop  
the dire agony of my conscience  
rather than offer it to you.*

1716

*But I know too well that it will not release  
you free from the stern, cruel laws  
of our Athens, at all.*

1719

*I am desperate and helpless, Socrates!”  
“My dear good friend, I thank you for  
your warm, gracious kindness!”*

1722

said Socrates with serene composure,  
*“Let us obey our laws with good cheers  
and hopes. I wish to pray*

1725

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*to the gods, breathing in fresh air outdoor,  
and drink the drug as their gift to  
freedom from the prison* 1728

*of this world.” The sun was setting in awesome  
grandeur. Socrates knelt and prayed  
earnestly in solitude.* 1731

He looked glowing in pure spiritual light  
like a god about to ascend up  
to the heaven. At last, 1734

he rose, and whispered to me in gentle  
tender voice: “*My gracious Xanthippe,  
I thank you for your deep love* 1737

*and devout devotion to this poor old man.  
Please forgive me, dear wife, for all  
dire hardships you have endured,* 1740

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

*and overcome. Nothing have I to entrust you  
but my love—plain yet pure eternal  
love of you deep from my heart.* 1743

*To Athena, I pray for her protection  
of you and our beloved children.  
To wise Prometheus,* 1747

*I dedicate my spirit.” He gently drank  
the poison in serene composure.  
Overwhelmed in awe, sorrow,* 1750

*and strange elation, I fell speechless in a trance,  
and then swooned. When I regained  
my sense, I found myself* 1753

*at my home and comforted by Euridice,  
the wife of Crito. That is all  
what I can remember* 1756

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

about what Socrates discussed with his friends,  
and how he met his death. I am  
a simple, illiterate 1759  
housewife who could not grasp the real meanings  
of their strange, abstruse, and unworldly  
discussions. Please check what 1762  
I related to you with the learned Crito,  
Antisthenes, and other friends  
who witnessed the final day 1765  
of Socrates.’ *Thus, Xanthippe finishes  
her passionate reminiscence  
of her revered husband.* 1768  
‘Thank you, Xanthippe,’ says *Plato in tears*,  
‘for relating to me the profound,  
abstruse, and vital matters 1771

*Socrates with Xanthippe on his Last Day*

which Socrates expounded to his devoted friends  
in his final hours, and how bravely  
and wisely he met his death. 1774

I vow that I will devote all my life  
to pursue what he has taught us,  
and to immortalize 1777

his lofty ideas by writing them into  
concrete and timeless books for all  
mankind to study in earnest. 1780

May his lofty spiritual light enlighten  
our soul forever to breathe in  
the sublime beauty of virtue.' 1783

**The End**





## Epilogue

[I] The present work is a fictional narrative on the dramatic aspect of the death of Socrates; it is neither a factual biography of the historical Socrates (c. 469 – 399 BCE) nor an academic argument either for or against Plato's (c. 427- c. 347 BCE) abstruse philosophical theory of the soul.

[II] Although the dialogues between the characters 'Plato' and 'Xanthippe' in this work are merely fictional imaginations, the author has tried them to be based on the relevant classical Greek texts in English translations to the best of his ability as much as they may be workable with the following references:

[A] Aeschylus: *The Suppliant Maidens, The Persian, Prometheus Bound, The Seven against Thebes*.  
Translated by Smyth, H.W. (1922). Loeb  
Classical Library #145, Harvard University Press.

[B] Aristotle: *Poetics*. Edited and translated by Halliwell, S.  
(1995). Loeb Classic Libr #199, Harvard Univ.

[C] Hesiod: *Hesiod, The Homeric Hymns and Homerica*.  
Translated by Evelyn-White, H. G. (1914).  
Loeb Classic Libr #57, Harvard Univ Press.

[D] Homer: *The Iliad*. Translated by Murray, A.T. (1924)  
Loeb Classic Libr #170 & #171, Harvard Univ.

[E] Plato: *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Phaedrus*.  
Translated by Fowler, H.N. (1914). Loeb Classic  
Library #36, Harvard University Press

[F] Xenophanes: *Fragments* A text and translation with  
a commentary by Leshner, J. H. (1992).  
University of Toronto Press.

[III] The relevance between the present fiction and the  
above references may be summarized as follows:

{1} The beginning episode (the lines from 1 to 85) in this  
fiction was based on the Plato's (c. 427- c. 347 BCE)  
dialogues *Phaedo* and *Crito* in the reference [E].

{2} The conversation between the characters *Socrates* and  
his wife, *Xanthippe*, pleading for his escape (lines 86-  
102) was inspired by the deeply moving episode of  
Hector's farewell to his wife Andromache in Book 6  
of *The Iliad* of Homer in the reference [D].

{3} The discussions on the nature of death between  
*Socrates* and *Cebes* or *Simmias* (lines 103-253) were  
based on Plato's *Phaedo*, and *Apology* in [E].

- {4} *Socrates's* quotations from Hesiod's *Theogony* (lines 404 - 419) were based on the beginning of *Theogony* in the reference [C].
  
- {5} In this fiction (lines 492-792), the character *Socrates* is portrayed to introduce and discuss with his friends about the revolutionary philosophical ideas of Xenophanes (c. 570- c. 475 BCE) with quotations from his philosophic poems. They were based on the scanty fragments of Xenophanes's abstruse philosophical poems, which survived the ravage of time in the reference [F].
  
- {6} The discussions among *Antisthenes*, *Socrates*, *Crito*, *Cebes*, and *Xanthippe* about the Aeschylus's (c. 525- c. 455 BCE) *Prometheus Bound* (lines 793-1050) and the recitations of Prometheus's monologues by *Antisthenes* and *Crito* were reconstructed from the reference [A].
  
- {7} The *Socrates's* discussion with *Antisthenes* and *Crito* on the nature of poetry in this fiction (lines 1169-1282) was a mere allusion, surmised from the Aristotle's *Poetics* in reference [B]. As for the historical Socrates's real view on poetry, the author does not know any relevant documents.

- [IV] All other episodes in this narrative are purely fictional imaginations for which the author is unable to provide any reference nor to claim them as if they were historical facts, at all; Especially the alleged last dream of the character *Socrates*: How he happened to meet with Prometheus, the compassionate saviour of the mankind from Zeus's cruel plan and our wise teacher of reasoning and use of fire; how Socrates repented to Prometheus for the people's vile bigotry of Zeus in disrespect of their saviour; and how he learned the deep mystery of the vast cosmic drama of the universe which unfolds by timeless, universal principles (lines 1502 – 1657); and the *Socrates's* apologetic excuse for the reason why he did not write down his thoughts into any concrete books (lines 1657 – 1701) are merely fanciful daydreams of the author.
- [V] The present fictional narrative is written in syllabic tercet stanzas: each tercet consists of three lines of varying syllabic length: first-line ten, second-line eight, and the third-line of six syllables. It is not a traditional English poem with the proper accentual prosody. Nevertheless, this strange syllabic writing is what its author could try best in his pidgin English to sing of the lofty ideas and sublime spirit of his revered Greek sages and poets who have inspired and nurtured him.

[VI] The author wishes to thank his daughter, Florence—  
a classist of Greek tragedies— for her thoughtful  
suggestions for improvements to this work.

The book-cover photograph of the sunset at sea was taken  
in Nova Scotia, Canada, by the author.

Art Aeon



